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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5917
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 001560

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

NEA FOR NEA/IPA AND EEB, STATE PASS USAID FOR BORODIN, NSC
FOR KUMAR, JOINT STAFF FOR SELVA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: IDF RAIDS BETHLEHEM RADIO STATION, CONFISCATES
TRANSMITTERS

REF: 8/28 MARCHESE/MORENO EMAIL

¶1. (U) This message includes an action request in para 7.

¶2. (SBU) Summary. On August 25, the IDF raided the popular Palestinian radio station "Bethlehem 2000," confiscating two transmitters. The PA Ministry of Telecommunications protested the lack of warning and coordination, and requested USG assistance in raising the issue with the GOI. End Summary.

IDF Raid Shuts Down Popular Palestinian Radio Station

¶3. (SBU) On the night of August 25, the IDF raided the office of Palestinian radio station "Bethlehem 2000", located in the West Bank town of Beit Jala, and confiscated two transmitters, forcing the station to cut its broadcast. Bethlehem 2000's broadcast covers Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah. The station describes itself as "a voice for social justice and reconciliation" that broadcasts news, music, political, social, and children's programs. The station is also part of the Internews/USAID development program, and was recently vetted by USAID.

Interference with Aviation or Israeli Radio Station?

¶4. (SBU) An IDF spokesman told the press that the station was raided because it interfered with transmissions at Ben Gurion Airport, a claim echoed by the Israeli Ministry of Communication to Embassy Tel Aviv (ref email). However, COGAT informed both the Embassy and the PA Ministry of Telecommunications that Bethlehem 2000's transmission was interfering with the Israeli radio station Galgalatz's Eilat broadcast on the same frequency (106.4 FM).

¶5. (SBU) According to Bethlehem 2000 station manager George Canawati, the station has been operating with the same frequency type and strength for the past eight years, and has the required permit from the PA (a copy dated January 1, 2009 was passed to the ConGen.) Canawati explained that, five months ago, the GOI confiscated some transmission equipment belonging to Bethlehem 2000's Hebron frequency (108 FM), claiming that it interfered with Israeli aviation communication. Bethlehem 2000 changed its frequency from 108 FM to 89.8 FM, and the equipment was returned. (Note: GOI officials may be confusing the Hebron incident with the latest raid, which may explain the two different explanations for the August 25 equipment seizure.)

PA: Coordination with GOI on Previous Cases Successful

¶6. (SBU) Both Galgalaz and Bethlehem 2000 have been

broadcasting on the same frequency for years, and similar cases of transmission interference between the Palestinian and Israeli radio stations has occurred due to technical reasons, according to PA Deputy Telecom Minister Suleiman Zuhairi. However, he said, previous cases were successfully resolved through coordination between the PA and the GOI. In the past, the GOI would inform Zuhairi, and he would instruct the radio station to lower its antennae or adjust its filter to put a stop to any transmission interference. Zuhairi said that, in this instance, neither the PA nor the radio station had been informed of the interference, and the raid had been conducted without any warning. Zuhairi said that the PA planned to send a letter to the GOI and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) protesting the raid and requesting the return of the transmitters.

¶7. (U) Action Request: Post recommends that the issue be raised with appropriate GOI officials to determine how it can be resolved and the transmitters returned, so that Bethlehem 2000 can return to the air.

WALLES